

How to Cut Down on Drinking

April is Alcohol Awareness Month



You might want to cut down on your drinking for many reasons. Unfortunately, the best of intentions don't necessarily make the effort any easier.

"Alcohol is a powerful drug, even if it is legal," says Joseph D. Beasley, M.D., author of *How to Defeat Alcoholism*. "If you are going to use it, you should use it wisely and in moderation. And if you are one of the 10 to 15% of the population with alcoholism in your family, you should be careful not to drink too much or too often, or not to drink at all."

Understand Why You Drink

While alcohol may be relaxing and enjoyable in small doses, drinking it is not harmless recreation. The substance should be treated with respect.

It helps to understand why and when you drink if you are going to successfully reduce the amount of

alcohol you consume. Your answers to the following questions may help bring your motives for drinking into focus.

- What is my mood when I drink too much?
- Am I nervous or anxious, angry, depressed, or lonely?
- Am I pressured to have another drink after I decide to stop?
- Do I rationalize my drinking?
- Do I drink as a reward for a tough day?
- Do I drink to fit in or be more comfortable in a social situation?

Social occasions don't usually happen just so people can get together and drink. They exist for other reasons, and no one is counting your drinks. If you are being pressured to drink by others when you don't want to, consider this: If they don't accept your decision, that's their problem. Most people will understand your choice and even respect you for your determination.

Did you know?

April 9th, 2009 is National Alcohol Screening Day.
Visit www.nationalalcoholscreeningday.org

Cut-Back Benefits

Reducing your drinking is a win-win situation. Whatever you think you may be giving up, you'll gain much more. Your health will benefit enormously. The calories you'll save may help you lose some extra weight. And you'll reduce your risk of the many health problems associated with alcohol use. You'll also find that in social situations you can have just as

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much fun, maybe even more, without the crutch of liquor. Plus, you'll save money and lead a more productive life.

What You Can Do

The best way to cut down on drinking is to have a plan for each situation in which you might drink too much. Establish a clear idea of how much you want to drink and how you will handle things once you've reached your limit. It helps to give yourself a time limit for staying at social functions.

Some specific suggestions on ways you can reduce your alcohol consumption include:

- Always stick to your limit.
- Don't drink alone.
- Drink slowly; don't gulp your beverage; and don't drink on an empty stomach.
- Don't drink every day.
- Add water or soda water to your drink to extend it without adding more alcohol.
- Don't start drinking the moment you arrive home or at an event. Wait awhile.
- Change your routine. For instance, if you normally have a drink at home after work, eat dinner or work out instead. Plan other activities to occupy your time.

For more information:

<http://cascade.personaladvantage.com/logon?target=alcohol>

ncadi.samhsa.gov



Healthy Recipe of the Month: Limas and Spinach

This tasty, nutritious veggie side dish is a cancer preventer the whole family will love!

Ingredients:

- 2 C frozen lima beans
- 1 Tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 C fennel, cut in 4-oz strips
- 1/2 C onion, chopped
- 1/4 C low-sodium chicken broth
- 4 C leaf spinach, washed thoroughly
- 1 Tbsp distilled vinegar
- 1/8 tsp black pepper
- 1 Tbsp raw chives

Instructions:

1. Steam or boil lima beans in unsalted water for about 10 minutes. Drain.
2. In skillet, sauté onions and fennel in oil.
3. Add beans and stock to onions and cover. Cook for 2 minutes.
4. Stir in spinach. Cover and cook until spinach has wilted, about 2 minutes.
5. Stir in vinegar and pepper. Cover and let stand for 30 seconds.
6. Sprinkle with chives and serve.

Yield: Makes 7 servings

Serving size: 1/2 cup

Each serving provides: Calories: 93, Total fat: 2 g, Saturated fat: less than 1 g, Cholesterol: 0 mg, Sodium: 84 mg, Total fiber: 6 g, Protein: 5 g, Carbohydrates: 15 g, Potassium: 452 mg



10 Ways to Reduce Your Cancer Risk

April is Cancer Control Month

Many people believe there's no way to prevent cancer. But, in fact, more than half the cancer deaths in the United States are caused by controllable factors. Thirty-five percent of the deaths are related to unhealthy diets, and 30% are related to tobacco use. Even when cancer develops, it's survivable if caught early.

Here are 10 ways to reduce your cancer risk or increase the odds of early detection:

1. Review your family medical history.

Some cancers run in families. Tell your doctor if your family has a cancer history. That will help the doctor determine if you should be monitored more closely for signs of the disease.

2. Assess your personal-health history.

If you've had cancer before, your risk of developing other cancers increases.

3. Improve your diet.

No single food prevents cancer, but diets low in fat and high in fiber, fruits, and vegetables can reduce your risk for some cancers.

Eat foods high in vitamins A, C, and E and beta carotene, and reduce your consumption of char-grilled, salt-cured, nitrate-cured, and smoked

foods.

4. Reduce your alcohol consumption.

Alcohol abuse has been linked to cancers of the mouth, larynx, pharynx, esophagus, liver, colorectum, and breast.

To help prevent the disease, limit your alcohol intake to no more than four drinks per week.

5. Maintain your ideal weight.

Overweight people put themselves at greater risk for some cancers.

6. Don't smoke.

Tobacco use puts you at greater risk for lung cancer, and it also increases your risk of laryngeal, oral, esophageal, urinary bladder, kidney, and pancreatic cancers.

7. Exercise.

Staying active helps reduce cancer by enhancing your immune-system functions. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise, such as brisk walking, at least five days per week.

8. Protect your skin from the sun.

Use sunscreens with an SPF of 15 or higher and cover up or avoid the sun between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

9. Avoid environmental risk factors.

Radon buildup in basements is common in some parts of the United States. Breathing this gas increases the risk of lung cancer. Inexpensive radon test kits are available to help you check your home for this gas.

Asbestos, a carcinogen, was commonly used as insulation in homes built between 1930 and 1950. If you know of any exposed asbestos in your home, have the problem assessed and corrected.

If you use pesticides or herbicides, protect yourself by following the directions carefully, wearing protective clothing, and avoiding application on windy days. Keep children and pets away from the area immediately afterward.

10. Do skin self-exams and visit your doctor for regular checkups.

Doing so is the best way to detect cancer early, when it's easier to treat. Visit your doctor

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immediately if you find any abnormality.

For more information:

<http://cascade.personaladvantage.com/logon?target=cancer>

www.cancer.org



How to Reduce the Chance of an Audit

April 15th, 2009 is Tax Day

There is no surefire way to audit-proof your tax return. Nevertheless, there are numerous steps you can take to reduce your audit risk:

- Prepare your tax return by computer. A neat, computer-prepared return looks more official to the IRS classifiers and fits the IRS bias favoring computer processing. Most professional tax preparers now use computers. There are some good PC and Macintosh programs, such as Intuit's TurboTax and MacInTax, that you can use to prepare your own return. If for some reason it isn't possible for you to use a computer, be certain to print carefully. A messy return -- cross-outs, sloppy handwriting, smudges -- almost screams "audit me!" It tells the IRS that you are careless and disorganized.
- Don't use round numbers for deductions -- for example, \$1,000 or \$12,000 instead of \$978 or \$12,127. It's an indication that you are

estimating things rather than keeping good records.

- If you claim large deductions for unusual items, such as an earthquake, flood, or fire loss, attach documentary proof to the back of your tax return. Copies of repair receipts, canceled checks, insurance reports, and pictures are advisable. This won't stop the IRS computer from flagging your return, but the documents should catch the attention of the IRS classifier who next screens computer-picked returns for audit potential. If he or she thinks your documentation looks reasonable, you won't get audited.
- Avoid filing an income tax return with Schedule C, Profit or Loss for Business, that reports a net loss from a small business venture. IRS auditors go after these returns like bees toward honey.
- Report side-job income as other income on line 22 of your tax return. Try this only if the income is relatively small, and you are not claiming any business deductions against it. Technically, side-job income is usually reported on Schedule C, Profit or Loss from Business. But filing a Schedule C undoubtedly increases your audit chances.
- Don't use electronic filing or the IRS preprinted address label on your tax return. These enable the IRS to get your return into the processing cycle, including the audit cycle, more quickly than otherwise would happen. Anything that slows down the IRS machine can't be bad. On the flip side, however, using electronic filing or the label usually means that any refund will come faster. If you expect a refund but fear an audit, you'll have to weigh the pros and cons.
- Live in a low audit area. Your audit chances are radically different depending on where you live. For example, Nevada taxpayers are audited four times more than people in Wisconsin. While moving your official address to reduce your chance of audit is extreme, it might make sense if you travel most of the time or have addresses in several areas. If you have flexibility in choosing your tax reporting address, choose the one with the lower audit rate. If you're really interested in this, ask your tax pro or visit the IRS local office information reading room.